



# **Natomas Oral Histories**

## **2015/027**

Oral interview of

**Beatrice Aquilar**

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Interviewer: Coey Sipes  
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*This is not a verbatim transcript. Parts of the interview have been paraphrased.*

**Coey:** Ok, would you tell me about your family background, when your parents and stuff came?

**Beatrice:** My dad was always working out in the fields, him and my grandfather. All this area here was fields. The rancher he used to work for was a man called Freitas. I remember really clearly how they used to come home all dusty and dirty, my grandfather too, because they used to work on the tractor and all that. Watering the tomato fields, too. There was nothing in this side, mostly just in Gardenland. There were just a few houses and little stores and stuff like that. I know there used to be a store — do you know where American Avenue is — where that Chinese store is?

**Coey:** Oh yes.

[00:01:17]

**Beatrice:** They used to have another one right before when you are coming down the levee, another Chinese store. I used to go to school right here when I was in first grade or kindergarten, right here in Gardenland School. I remember that my dad used to have credit at the Chinese store right coming down from the levee. He had told the Chinese man that I was going to be shopping once in a while to get the things I would need, but I used to get kind of out of hand. I used to come home with a big old bag, I was little. I could barely pack it. I remember my grandfather used to meet me on the levee. He used to come down the levee and meet me because he knew that I was always coming with a big bag. Actually, it was just full of goodies, it was nothing really. It was bananas, ice cream, and all that kind of stuff. Whatever I wanted, you know. I remember that really well. My sisters were all small. At that time, I only had, let me see, three sisters I think at that time. I remember my sisters were small. We are about a year apart. If I was five I really had four sisters, I think. I used to come with a big old bag and I could hardly walk.

**Coey:** All filled with goodies.

**Beatrice:** Yes. They charged it, you know. After that my mom used to tell my grandfather that when I grow up she hoped I would be able to find a man who would be able to give her what she wants because she loves to shop. Anyway, I remember her telling me that and my grandfather saying, I hope so, too. We used to have some neighbors right across the street from school.

[00:03:48]

**Coey:** What languages did you speak?

**Beatrice:** English

**Coey:** English? Let's see. Who were some of the neighbors that you associated with?

**Beatrice:** In Gardenland?

**Coey:** Yes.

**Beatrice:** Let me see. Quite a few families. There was Juarez, and another woman who was my cousin's godmother, Josephine. There were others, but I can't remember their names, because it has been ages.

**Coey:** Yes. How were the roads? Were there any ferries?

**Beatrice:** There used to be a ferry right here in Elkhorn. We moved from here to a ranch — how do you call it — anyway, before you crossed the ferry, no a little bit after you crossed the ferry. We used to have to cross the ferry every time we needed to go to Sacramento to do shopping.

**Coey:** What were the schools named?

[00:05:47]

**Beatrice:** Oh, I don't know. There was a really small little school out in the country but I don't remember the name of it. I remember the school bus used to pick us up. I guess I just didn't pay attention to what the name of the school was.

**Coey:** Ok. Was farming the main source of revenue here in Natomas?

**Beatrice:** Yes, it was.

**Coey:** Do you know of any of the methods that they used?

**Beatrice:** Well, I imagine tractors and a lot of irrigation. I remember my dad and my grandfather both irrigated a lot. Mostly that is what they did.

**Coey:** Do you remember any struggles regarding the water rights?

**Coey:** Do you remember anything about the Natomas Company or RD 1000, the flood control, or the airport?

**Beatrice:** No.

**Coey:** Do you remember any laws that you thought were unfair?

**Beatrice:** No, not really. I guess I just didn't pay much attention to those things. When you are young you don't pay attention to those things, you leave it up to your parents.

**Coey:** Do you think development has hurt this area, or been an improvement?

**Beatrice:** Well, there has been an improvement in a way. There is a lot of traffic that my husband and me don't like, on West El Camino.

[00:07:35]

**Coey:** How did you and your family react to Sacramento? Was it a big deal to go there? How often did you get there?

**Beatrice:** When we used to live on the ranch?

**Coey:** Yes.

**Beatrice:** It was a big treat for us because my dad worked on the ranch and we didn't go every week to the store, actually every month. When we went, we bought a lot of groceries, and it was a big deal. That's about it. I remember down on K Street they used to have an ice cream store, and my dad used to buy us a big old ice cream cone, and that was a big treat for us.

**Coey:** Ok. What did you and your family do for entertainment?

**Beatrice:** My dad took us swimming. We would have family picnics. All the holidays we got together, and that was something.

[00:08:50]

**Coey:** Ok. Did you know that Bannon Creek used to be Brannon Creek?

**Beatrice:** No, I didn't know that.

**Coey:** Would you like to tell us anything else about life in Natomas?

**Beatrice:** Well, the only sad thing is that we don't have too much country now. It is all filling up with houses and stuff. Life is like that; it changes and we don't have any control over that. We just need to go along and not get upset because it will not help us.

**Coey:** Can you say your name for me?

**Beatrice:** My name is Beatrice Aguilar.

**Coey:** Ok, thank you.